

**Military Collection**  
**State Archives of North Carolina**

**Elmer N. Griggs Papers (WWI 100)**  
[World War I]

**Collection Number:** WWI 100

**Title:** Elmer N. Griggs Papers

**Dates:** 1911, 1914, 1916-1918, undated

**Creator:** Elmer N. Griggs; U.S. Army; and various others.

**Abstract**

The Elmer N. Griggs Papers is composed of postcards, real-photo postcards, photographs, military field notebooks, military training manuals, military records, battalion burial officer records, and military maps, documenting the World War I service of Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., in the North Carolina National Guard and the U.S. Army between 1908 and 1920. Griggs served prior to WWI in the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps and later in the North Carolina National Guard during the expedition against Pancho Villa. In WWI, he served as a 1st Lieutenant in Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion, 30th Division. The bulk of the collection is composed of training manuals for various aspects of military service and equipment operation—such as the Vickers Machine Gun. There are two original field notebooks from 1917 and 1918, with Griggs' notes from training camps on aspects of machine gun unit operation, military training, and commanding of soldiers in his position as an officer. They document the type of information a U.S. Army machine gun officer had to know to function in the field of Europe in WWI.

The most interesting items in the collection are a series of real-photo postcards, some of which were mailed as postcards and some functioning just as photographs—documenting Elmer Griggs' pre-WWI military service, including his time as a baseball pitcher while serving at Fort Screven, Georgia. The postcards documenting his life in the Coast Artillery Corps and National Guard from 1910 to 1916. There are also two original British field maps used by Griggs in France in 1918 while with the 113th Machine Gun Battalion. There are also baggage records for the officers of Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion, listing their weight and supplies in some cases. Additionally, there are original records and orders for Griggs after he was appointed the burial officer for the Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion, including blank grave location forms used on the battlefield in Europe by the U.S. Army. There is also Griggs' original WWI Vickers machine gun protractor, used in the field in Europe during the war.

**Physical Description:** 0.40 linear feet (1 Hollinger box); 2 maps; 1 artifact

**Language(s):** English

## **Repository**

State Archives of North Carolina, 4614 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4614

**Restrictions on Access:** There are no restrictions on accessing this collection.

**Restrictions on Use:** There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

## **Preferred Citation**

[Item name or title], [Box Number], [Folder Numbers], Elmer N. Griggs Papers, WWI 100, WWI Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

## **Acquisition**

The materials in this collection were received by the Military Collection at the State Archives of North Carolina from Joan Scott Smith of Helena, Montana, through an intermediary in the fall of 2014.

## **Separated Material**

The two oversized maps have been separated from the collection due to their size, and stored in an oversized archival folder. They were relocated to the Military Collection Oversized Map case in the Archives Stacks 3B. The oversized folder is labeled as “WWI 100 Elmer N. Griggs Papers, Oversized Folder 1.”

## **Processing Information**

The materials in this collection had no original order when they were received from the donor in 2014. The collection was organized based on the format and/or purpose of the materials in acid-free archival folders. Several postcards which are real-photo postcards were organized as photographs, despite them having been mailed with text to various individuals. The text on the backs of the postcards relate more to the description of the images than serving a function as a postcard. Several real-photo postcards which are really serving as postcards were organized as postcards, as the text is specifically that of a correspondence nature to various individuals. These real-photo postcards treated as correspondence were still individually stored in an acid-free, archival plastic sleeves to allow for researchers to handle the original image without causing damage to the image’s surface, and to improve preservation during long-term storage

The photographs in the collection have been individually stored in an acid-free, archival plastic sleeves to allow for researchers to handle the original image without causing damage to the image’s surface, and to improve preservation during long-term storage. The photographs have been numbered with a soft HB No. 2 pencil on the backs, according to the collection number, the folder number, and an individual image number. For example, the number “WWI 100.B1.F5.1” should be interpreted as “WWI 100 collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Photograph 1.” The

identification of this image has been created in the finding aid, but not written on the photograph itself. Historical research was conducted to provide an accurate description for the photographs.

Two original WWI military maps were removed from the collection due to their large sizes. They were removed and relocated to an oversized folder to allow for better physical storage and long-term preservation (see “Separated Material” note for more information on the maps). Although artifacts are typically stored separating from the majority of the collection in artifact boxes, the machine gun protractor was of a shape and material that it was determined to leave the artifact in the main collection. The artifact was stored on edge in a white acid-free archival envelope, with the descriptive information written on it. The envelope was placed in an acid-free archival folder—as with the majority of the other materials in the collection—which is numbered “Box 1, Folder 15.”

**Processed by:** Matthew M. Peek, January 2018.

### **Arrangement**

The collection is arranged by format or purpose of the materials within folders. chronologically where possible.

### **Biographical Note**

Elmer Nelson Griggs was born on February 3, 1890, in Asheville, N.C., to James P. and Fannie L. Matthews Griggs. By 1900, the Griggs family was living in Asheville, and James Griggs was working as a carpenter. According to the *Greensboro Daily News*, Elmer N. Griggs enlisted in the U.S. Army on June 18, 1908, after being recruited by an Army recruiting officer named Sinclair of Charlotte, who had traveled to the Asheville U.S. Army Recruiting Station specifically to recruit people from the area. Griggs was one of six Asheville area men who enlisted on June 18. He would be registered into the U.S. Army at the Columbus Barracks in Columbus, Ohio, and was assigned to the 21st Company, U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps.

By March 1911, Elmer Griggs was attending the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps’ Coast Artillery School at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. On March 10, 1911, Griggs was transferred from Fort Monroe to Galveston, Texas, for service in Mexico (according to a postcard from Griggs), leaving by ship from Newport News, Virginia. He arrived in Galveston on March 18, 1911, assigned to the 21st Company, 2nd Provincial Regiment, Coast Artillery Corps. According to Griggs, his unit was waiting in Galveston for the 62nd U.S. Congress to make a decision on the destination of the U.S. Army troops in response to the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution, once their session began underway in March 1911. This would be the beginning of America’s involvement in Mexico with what would later become U.S. General John J. Pershing’s expedition against Pancho Villa.

Elmer N. Griggs was honorably discharged on June 21, 1911, at Galveston, Texas, with the rank of Sergeant and reported as having Excellent Service. Apparently Elmer Griggs would re-enlist in the Army after working as a salesman for a period in Asheville, N.C. He enlisted at the Columbus Barracks in Columbus, Ohio, on October 28, 1911, and assigned to the 121st

Company, U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps. By November 1913, Elmer Griggs was serving as a Corporal in the 121st Company, U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps, at Fort Screven, Georgia. While in Georgia, Griggs played baseball locally, serving as a pitcher. Elmer Griggs was honorably discharged from the Army on October 27, 1914. Elmer's brother Walter J. Griggs was serving in Nogales, Arizona, on the Mexican border in Company K, 12th Infantry, U.S. Army, as of 1913.

By 1916, Elmer Griggs had enlisted in and was serving with Company F, 1st Infantry Regiment, North Carolina National Guard. By November 1916, all three Griggs' brothers—Elmer, Walter J., and Paul D.—were serving together in the North Carolina National Guard in El Paso, Texas, as part of Pershing's Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa. By early 1917, Elmer Griggs was serving as a 1st Sergeant in the North Carolina National Guard. Griggs' unit was transferred into federal service for World War I in the U.S. Army with the North Carolina National Guard on August 7, 1917, and assigned to Camp Sevier, S.C., for training by the end of July 1917. Prior to his World War I service, Elmer Griggs married Margaret Helen Young on June 18, 1917, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Young had originally lived in the community of Fairview in Buncombe County, N.C.—near Elmer Griggs's home while the two were growing up—before their marriage in 1917.

Griggs was assigned to Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion, 30th Division, where he was commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant by July 23, 1917. He would later in 1918 be assigned to Camp Lee, Virginia. Griggs served overseas from the time he left the United States by troop transport on May 19, 1918, until he returned in January 1919. On July 22, 1918, Griggs was appointed by the commander of the 113th Machine Gun Battalion as the burial officer for Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion. In this role, he was responsible for recording and registering the battlefield or military cemetery burials for all deaths within the entire battalion—as well as assisting in recording the dead for other units who were unable to communicate with their units' burial officers. Griggs was wounded severely by a gas attack while in action on October 17, 1918, during the Somme Offensive that involved the 30th Division's breaking of the German's Hindenburg Line. After his injury, Griggs was assigned to the Blois Casual Company No. 324 until January 1919. He was transported by ship back to the United States on December 26, 1918, aboard the ship troop transport ship *Kansas* leaving from Brest, France. Griggs arrived by in the United States on January 8, 1919.

In order to recover from his injuries, Griggs was assigned to the U.S. General Hospital No. 19 in Oteen, N.C.—not too far from his wife and family in Asheville. While he was recuperating from his injuries, he was assigned as part of 8th Company, 155th Depot Brigade, until his discharge. During 1920 while at Oteen, he was working in the hospital store there. His enlistment period was lengthened in order to provide him with medical attention, apparently. Elmer Griggs was not discharged from the U.S. Army until January 20, 1920, because of his physical disability, reported as 60% disabled.

After his military service, Elmer Griggs had become a train conductor with the Pullman Company in Asheville by 1921. He worked as a conductor for Pullman for the rest of his professional career, possibly retiring by 1957. For his service, Griggs received a full company pension on which he lived until his death. The rest of Elmer Griggs' life was not without

difficulties. The wife who stuck with him through over two years of recuperation from wartime gas exposure—Margaret Young Griggs—died on July 13, 1937, in Asheville, N.C., at the age of 38. Griggs later remarried to Sallie McDaniel (or Morris) on August 4, 1946, in Asheville.

Elmer N. Griggs died on July 9, 1975, in Asheville, N.C., and was buried in Lewis Memorial Park in the same city.

## **Scope and Content**

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## **Subject Terms**

### **Persons/Families**

Griggs, Elmer N. (Elmer Nelson), 1890-1975

### **Corporate Names**

North Carolina. National Guard

## **Places**

Asheville (N.C.)  
Buncombe County (N.C.)

## **Subject—Topical**

United States. Army. Coast Artillery Corps. Company, 121st  
United States. Army. Division, 30th  
United States. Army--History--Punitive Expedition into Mexico, 1916  
United States. Army. Machine Gun Battalion, 113th  
World War, 1914-1918--Mexico

## **Material Types**

Maps  
Military records  
Photographic postcards  
Photographs  
Postcards  
Training manuals

## **Collection Inventory**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
1/1	121st Company, Coast Artillery Corps, 1913 Thanksgiving Dinner Menu and Roster	November 27, 1913
1/2	Postcards to Family and Friends	1911, 1914, circa 1916, circa 1918, undated
1/3	Griggs' 1917 Army Field Notebook	1917
1/4	Griggs' 1918 Army Field Notebook	1918
1/5	Photographs	1911, circa 1910s

**WWI 100.B1.F5.1:** Real-photo postcard of a group photograph of the sergeants of the 21st Company, U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps, posing outside of a company Army tent at their camp in Galveston, Texas, in the spring 1911. Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., is pictured (1911).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.2:** Real-photo postcard of unidentified soldiers standing at attention in lines in an unidentified military camp. Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., is believed to be in this photograph [taken while Griggs was serving either in the U.S. Army or the North Carolina National Guard between 1911 and 1918] (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.3:** Real-photo postcard of unidentified soldiers standing with packs on their backs in a line on a military camp street, with tents in the background. Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., is believed to be second from left in the foreground of the photograph [taken while Griggs was serving either in the U.S. Army or the North Carolina National Guard between 1911 and 1918] (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.4:** Real-photo postcard of unidentified soldiers wearing American football uniforms and pads, posing in a military camp at an unidentified location. The men appear to be part of a camp football team. Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., is believed to be part of this group's military unit [taken while Griggs was serving either in the U.S. Army or the North Carolina National Guard between 1911 and 1918] (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.5:** Real-photo postcard of unidentified soldiers breaking rocks to build a concrete wall in an unidentified tropical location [possibly Texas or Cuba]. Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., is believed to be in the photograph [taken while Griggs was serving either in the U.S. Army or the North Carolina National Guard between 1911 and 1918] (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.6:** Real-photo postcard of two unidentified soldiers [believed to be members of the North Carolina National Guard] laying on Army cots receiving medical attention from military medical staff. Photograph taken while Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., was serving with these soldiers [taken while Griggs was serving in the North Carolina National Guard between 1914 and 1918] (circa 1910s) [Photograph by: The Wootten Studio, New Bern, N.C.].

**WWI 100.B1.F5.7:** Real-photo postcard of an unidentified soldier, posing inside the entrance to his military tent in an unidentified camp. The man is believed to be a member of the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps. Photograph taken while Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., was serving with this soldier (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.8:** Real-photo postcard of unidentified soldiers serving in the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps at Fort Screven, Georgia, horsing around appearing to be ready to cut a toe off of a fellow soldier with a rifle bayonet. The men are pictured in their camp with their tents in the background. Photograph taken while Elmer N. Griggs of Asheville, N.C., was serving with these soldiers [taken while Griggs was serving in the U.S. Army Coast Artillery Corps between 1911 and 1916] (circa 1910s).

**WWI 100.B1.F5.9:** Snapshot of eight unidentified members of a family posing outside on a lawn [believed to be the Griggs family of Asheville, N.C.]. A U.S. Army soldier is pictured in uniform [believed to be Elmer N. Griggs] (circa 1910s).

1/6	Military Orders	August-September 1918
1/7	Company B, 113th Machine Gun Battalion Baggage and Property Lists	May 1918, undated
1/8	Machine Gun Tables and Blank Charts	June 1918, undated
1/9	Griggs' 113th Machine Gun Battalion Burial Officer Records	July 1918, September-October 1918, undated
1/10	<i>Tactical Use of Machine Guns</i> Regulations	July 1918
1/11	Army Training Manuals: <i>The Employment of Machine Guns</i> , Parts 1 and 2	January 1918
1/12	U.S. Army Signal Book 1916	1916
1/13	Miscellaneous Training Manuals	1918, undated
1/14	Griggs Family 1918 Photo Calendar	1918
1/15	Artifact: Vickers Machine Gun Protractor	1916



## **Oversized Folder 1**

### **Griggs 1918 Maps**

**Map 1:** Wiancourt, Edition 1A, Field Survey Battalion, Royal Engineers, September 21, 1918, [Information from Captured German Maps printed in Red]; cloth-backed paper, with colored lines and grease-pen markings, 1/20,000 scale. Showing American and Australian Divisions' positions marked. Map originally folded and used by Elmer N. Griggs while serving with the 113th Machine Gun Battalion, 30th Division, U.S. Army.

**Map 2:** France, Edition 2(a), Sheet 57B, S.E., Ordnance Survey, September 1918, corrections in red; cloth-backed paper, with colored lines, 1/20,000 scale. Map originally folded and used by Elmer N. Griggs while serving with the 113th Machine Gun Battalion, 30th Division, U.S. Army.